"Truth Is One, Men Call It By Various Names." —RIG VEDA

VEDANTA QUARTERLY

Message of the East

VOLUME XLIV 1955 NUMBER 1

SPRING ISSUE

LIBRARY
N. W. Luth. Theol. Sem
116 East 22nd Street
Minneapolis, Minnesota

JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH

DIRECT VISION OF TRUTH

Issued by

THE ANANDA ASHRAMA

5301 No. PENNSYLVANIA AVE.

MAILING ADDRESS P. O. BOX 577

LA CRESCENTA, CALIFORNIA

THE VEDANTA CENTRE

130 BEECHWOOD STREET, COHASSET, MASSACHUSETTS

Copyright by the Vedanta Centre, Inc., 1955

SINGLE COPIES 75c $3.00 A YEAR

CONTENTS

Universal Message ..... *Various Sources*
Direct Vision of Truth ..... *by Swami Paramananda*
Going Forward ..... *by Srimati Gayatri Devi*
A Visit to Dakshineswar ..... *a report*
Vedanta on the Air ..... *by Sister Daya and Olive Conway*
Johannes Kelpius ..... *by David Grindell*
From a Disciple's Notebook ..... *(continued)*
Report

REGULAR EVENTS

VEDANTA CENTRE — ANANDA ASHRAMA
130 Beechwood St., Cohasset, Massachusetts

Open daily. Visitors welcome.

VEDANTA CHAPEL AND LIBRARY
202 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, Massachusetts

Services: Sunday 11 A.M.
Class lecture: Thursday 8 P.M.
Gayatri Devi of India in charge.

ANANDA ASHRAMA, La Crescenta, California
Services: Sun. 11 A.M. and 3:15 P.M.
Class: Thurs. 8 P.M.
Sister Daya in charge.

Bound volumes of the *Message of the East*, from 1912 to 1940, (with the exceptions of volumes for 1915, 1916, 1918 and 1919) obtainable for $1.00 a copy at Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, Calif. and Ananda Ashrama, Cohasset, Mass.

All of Swami Paramananda's works and other Vedanta literature, as well as the publication, "Message of the East," may be obtained directly from Vedanta Centre, 130 Beechwood St., Cohasset, Mass., and from Ananda-Ashrama, Box 577, La Crescenta, Calif. They are obtainable also from the following addresses:

New York City: Brentano, 586 Fifth Ave.; Baker & Taylor Co., 55 Fifth Ave.; Samuel Weiser, 117 Fourth Ave.

Published quarterly at 5301 No. Pennsylvania Avenue, La Crescenta, California. Mailing address P. O. Box 577, La Crescenta, California.

Entered as second class matter at Post Office at La Crescenta, California.

Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of
Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*

"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*

VOLUME XLIV 1955 NUMBER 1

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up;

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. —*St. Paul*

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

Be sincere in your practice, words and deeds. You will feel how blessed you are. His blessings are always showered on all creatures on the earth. It is needless to ask for it. Practice meditation sincerely and then you will understand His infinite grace. God wants sincerity, truthfulness and love. Outward verbal effusions do not touch Him. —*The Holy Mother*

Even this I desire of you, that your prayers may be simple, without a multiplicity of words, so that God, who pours out His Spirit upon the simple, may Himself be your prayer—simple in thoughts, abandoning and not entertaining them, simple in understanding, depending wholly upon God . . . O let us pray! Let us pray! Prayer is our only safety. —*Johannes Kelpius*

Do not attach most value to external results, but to being yourself in the Truth; to being free and at home with yourself, whatever other people may think. We have been badly brought up if we always aim at producing an effect on others! And, moreover, real influence is gained in quite a different way. True growth lies in being content with ourselves; and then, when circumstances demand it, being quite ready to share anything we may have with others . . . Cultivate freedom of spirit, spaciousness of mind: live in peace, boldly and with tranquility. Some day you will be able to pass all that on to others.

—*The Abbe de Tourville*

There is a vast difference between saying "food, food," and eating it, between saying "water, water," and drinking it. So by merely repeating the word "God, God" we cannot hope to attain realization. We must strive and practice. —*Swami Vivekananda*

DIRECT VISION OF TRUTH

by Swami Paramananda

(A class talk given by the Swami at the Vedanta Centre, Boston, Massachusetts, on February 3, 1920)

In spiritual study it is never a question of how much time we may give to theories, dogmas and all such things, it is wholly a matter of assimilation. We cannot assimilate something alien to our life and consciousness. In the first place, unless our whole being is in harmony with the things we are desirous of studying, we shall fail to get into their rhythm, and as a result, we shall have no power of penetration. At the outset we are moved by a certain amount of curiosity; we think that all that is necessary is to gather information and be able to quote passages from the great Bibles of the world, or repeat certain formulas. The real, fundamental spiritual teaching, however, has very little to do with such things. On the contrary, they prove great drawbacks unless we guard ourselves against pretense and vanity. People often think that they know, they have the conceit of knowledge, but the real knowledge is a matter of self-unfoldment and self-realization. We know, not because something is proclaimed in some holy book, but because we have experienced it. I think we cannot lay too much emphasis on this knowledge through experience.

Today in our modern life the trend is toward the superficial. If a person belongs to a church he feels that is sufficient. He accepts the dogmas of the church without too much individual questioning, and they become his religion.

In the Orient, in India, for instance, the individual has a sense of freedom in regard to things of the spirit.

There it is a basic belief that religion is not a matter of belonging to a church or of professing a creed; it is a matter of evolving a deeper insight and understanding, and expressing it through the life. Thus religion is looked upon as a blending of outer life with essential spiritual being.

We cannot partition off that spiritual essence any more than we can partition off the sky overhead. It is all-pervading, all-permeating; it is everywhere, and for that reason we must never approach spiritual things with superficial interest. One does not become spiritual merely by subscribing to a faith. Our faith has to be worked out in our life, and in this working out we find that every individual being has just as much right to his own way to Truth as has the wisest saint.

The practical system of any religion teaches us that the inherent Power which we call the God part, the Everlasting, dwells in the depths of every human soul. But merely accepting with intellectual understanding or theoretical grasp the fact that we have something undying, very potent within us, is entirely different from actually knowing it. Theoretical knowledge is just like a man who is told that he has inherited a fortune, but who has no conscious control over the money. In those circumstances he might even suffer from dire distress and poverty. The same way it is with us. We are told that we have a divine heritage, that we are children of God, that disease, death, afflictions and all the petty troubles of life cannot touch us; but as long as we are conscious of our physical part and are not conscious of our spiritual being, we feel these things, we cannot help but feel them. We can, however, reverse the order; as consciousness of our spiritual entity increases, our awareness of the physical fades away. This

does not mean that we become so ethereal that we do not have any more physical consciousness, rather it means that we learn to make better use of our physical instrument. We are able to put it through any kind of test and it does not fail us; we can train it to be skilful in any line of activity.

Direct knowledge or realization, however, does not come accidentally; it must have a practical basis, and that practical basis is one and the same everywhere. All religions tell us that love is a great factor in evolution, purity is a great factor, charity is a great factor, and that all these beautiful, divine attributes combined form the foundation for higher understanding. It is not that one religion is great and another not so great, or that one has more of Truth and another less. The whole meaning of any religion lies in its expression through the individual life. Who is a follower of any faith? One who lives that faith, whose actions are united with the Ideal. This union in India is called *Yoga*. *Yoga* literally means union. Knowledge is never born unless union takes place, union between subject and object, union between mind and the subject it is studying. There must be a point of contact. An astronomer never learns anything about the planets until he has found his point of contact with them. He keeps on adjusting his telescope until that contact has been established; then the distance which separates him from those planets is lessened and definite knowledge is the result.

So with us. We imagine certain things in regard to Divinity. The idea of Divine knowledge, the Kingdom of God, is to a majority of people something very indefinite. The extraordinary thing is that many are satisfied to leave it indefinite and look to the ministers, the preachers

and the churches to work out the problem of life for them. That is what I mean by a superficial acceptance of religion. People think it is quite sufficient to subscribe to a faith or believe in some creed, as if anyone could really believe without verifying, without knowing.

What happens to a person who merely in a lethargic way says, "I accept this or that?" Can such a person withstand the shock of a moment of crisis? Most often he cannot. I shall never forget the impression I received in Europe where I happened to be at the outset of the Great World War. Men whom one believed to be most wise, men who were movers of human destiny—great intellectuals—were as helpless as babies. All intellectual calculation and all theories fall to the ground when man comes face to face with some fearful and unexpected emergency. Very few people can meet these emergencies with strength and decision if they lack spiritual insight.

Our intellectual planning does not take us very far. It can help us to a certain extent on the physical and mental planes, but it is absolutely helpless on the higher planes of existence. There spiritual intuition alone will suffice, and that is something we cannot acquire by mere superficial effort or by a pretense of belief. We must have it within us; it must be born as the product of our own thought, reflections and study. By this I do not mean merely study of books, but real study—study of one's own inner self. There is a part of us which we have left unexplored. Whenever we are confronted with any difficulty, we try to find the solution on the outside. We reach out for help to this one and that one, but fail to look within where alone the remedy for our troubles may be found. There is a type of mentality, however, which is reluctant to go anywhere outside for help; it spontaneous-

ly turns inward and seeks in the depths of the soul for the light that it needs.

Its search is not in vain. For within the soul of man is the infinite, all-encompassing Spirit—the Source of all strength and wisdom. There is no one who does not possess this Spirit. Every human being possesses It, some consciously, some unconsciously. It is man's heritage. Conscious possession of It is the mark of spiritual magnitude. Then we know through direct vision. It does not make any difference what name men give to our faith. Real knowledge cannot be labeled. There is within us an abiding Reality. When we lay hold upon That, then we are on stable ground. Everything else in life changes, one thing mingling with another like the clouds in the sky, but there is always the unchanging background.

Unfortunately most of us have not the patience to go beneath the surface of things to discover that background. We say, "It is too difficult; I lack the strength and endurance to overcome all my shortcomings and discover the Truth for myself." But who is going to do it for us? Can anybody else eat for us and give us nourishment? Can anybody else drink for us and quench our thirst? The great souls and the great religions can inspire us and stimulate us, but we must not expect them to think for us so that we receive the benefit. We prove our spiritual insight, sincerity and worth, as well as our real yearning, by the effort we make. Each soul must win through its own effort. And the effort must be continuous. It shows a great lack of understanding to argue that because you have followed certain practices for a few days there is no need to go on with them. Would you apply the same argument to your physical habits, would you say, "I have eaten once, therefore I do not need to eat again"? Of course you would not.

In spiritual matters the excuse that is generally given for lack of perseverance is lack of time. Yet when it comes to the things we want to do, we always find time. This attitude marks the superficial tendency of modern life. We put aside the things which are vital and essential, and form the habit of doing only those things which we call natural and needful. It is through discrimination rather than through surface desires and selfish inclination that we are able to find out what is really essential to our life and well being.

Discrimination is one of the greatest of our God-given gifts. By means of it we discover what is real and what is only apparent, and gain a sense of proportion in all our thoughts and actions. Very few of us have a sense of proportion. Sometimes we do too much along some line or else not enough. Let us learn to do things in a balanced way. It is one of life's most useful lessons. Life teaches us how to conserve our forces. The great *Yoga* system of India lays emphasis on proportion and balance. It instructs us not merely in metaphysical problems, but it shows us how we may make the best use of our physical body.

The body is an instrument. It can be a detrimental instrument, heavy and lethargic, a great drawback to the study of higher things; also this body can become so efficient, so alert, keen and purified that it is like a beautiful companion during our earthly sojourn. What makes it so? Our zeal, our mental attitude.

There is a simple text which we all know and which we too often forget. It comes to us from all faiths. It is neither ancient nor modern. Rather it is timeless. It has always existed and will always exist because it is the most fundamentally practical statement one can find. In

India it is given in the Sanskrit, "Whatever one thinks, that, verily, he becomes;" or "Man's attainment is in accordance with his thought." And in the Bible we read, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." What else could he be? If we aspire for one thing we cannot acquire something wholly different. There is a law of attraction. Whatever we love, whatever we long for, we naturally think of that person or thing. We cannot think for long of something contrary to our nature. We might try to do so, but very soon our minds would drift away. But it is no effort to think constantly of that which profoundly interests us or that which we love. Moreover, if our thoughts are of a high order, then they do transform our whole being.

Why does a St. Francis become Christlike? Why does a *Yogi* become Godlike and full of holy attributes? Why does a devotee, living close to the heart of a saintly person, become saintlike? The explanation is very simple. It has to do with the law of attraction and the law of assimilation. In our human experience we often find two people, perhaps a man and his wife, so devoted to each other that they spontaneously think the same thoughts and do the same things. They talk alike and even grow to look alike, they are so absolutely absorbed in each other. If this is true on the physical plane, on the higher planes of existence it is even more apparent. Whenever we succeed in focusing our thoughts, concentrating our whole being on a high spiritual principle, our whole consciousness is uplifted. We do not have to go through any mysterious process or intricate study; we need only to make our mind flow in an unbroken stream toward the chosen Ideal.

At first it is not easy to establish this higher rhythm

because we have so many things to overcome, past habits, impressions and notions. For that reason we have to train ourselves. Our whole future development depends on this training. Some people get discouraged at the very outset, but there are others who are so determined that no matter how many times they fail, they keep right on. There is a little poem in the Bengali language, by means of which a mystic sage tells us, "A hundred times you may fall down, but let not that defeat you. Who knows, the next time you may succeed." Failure does not indicate impossibility of attainment. The heart which is not weighed down by a sense of failures, and is not discouraged by difficulties and dangers always wins out in the end.

Success comes to the undepressed heart. We must never grow fainthearted. Big things are not accomplished suddenly. Also we have to prove our zeal, our real interest. One who deeply desires a thing, it does not matter to him how many times he fails to achieve it, he never stops trying. It is the proof he gives of the depth of his longing. Same way our genuine interest in spiritual practice gives proof of the sincerity of our feelings and consecration. We become wholehearted and concentrated in our pursuit of the thing we want most. The same law applies on the spiritual plane.

We are all, I think, familiar with the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and with that further saying of Lord Jesus, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Yet how few there are, how

very few, who act as if they really believed in these teachings. Men do not for that reason, however, think that they are lacking in faith or spirituality. But how can we have genuine spirituality or faith or any connection with our Ideal unless we obey these first commandments, that we love God and our brother? Without genuine love in our hearts we cannot realize any spiritual principle.

This brings me back to what I started to say in the beginning, that it is not a matter of how much time we devote to intellectual study, or what books we read, or what faith we profess; spiritual awakening depends wholly upon our attitude and the atmosphere we create. Suppose someone picks up and starts to read the best and most uplifting of books or Bibles while his heart is full of envy, jealousy, unrest, as well as small and petty considerations. What upliftment, what benefit will that reading bring to him? It is the right quality of mind which is needed. We need a mind free from all these afflictions. In India no one begins the study of the *Gita,* the *Upanishads* or any sacred scripture without first intoning the peace chant, "Let there be peace unto all living beings." Why do they pray in this way? Because unless the heart is full of peace it has no power of penetration. Did not Christ tell His disciples, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift"?

The mind that is agitated or distracted in any way is not capable of ascending to that which is high and holy. As I have said, spiritual study is not just a matter of spending so much time, but rather of creating an atmosphere. Sometimes even one moment spent in a tranquil

and harmonious state will bring wonderful realization, will give a sense of nearness to the Ideal, of inner fulfillment. Moreover, the memory of that moment will become like a rock upon which you can stand. The whole thing is a matter of individual experience. We experience, therefore we believe, we know. Those who do not know and try to believe from hearsay, their belief can be shaken. They can easily be disturbed and overthrown. Therefore individual experience should be our first and foremost consideration.

When we move on the surface of things we are conscious of great differences—differences between people, between beliefs, between all things, and these differences often assume tremendous proportions. When, however, we enter the heart of spiritual reality all these outer differences seem to vanish. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that a man standing on a low level sees a great contrast between a plant and a tree, between a man and an elephant, but when he climbs to the mountain top all things blend and seem the same size. Thus it is that when we rise to the heights of wisdom the big things and the little things of life assume equal proportion and bother us no more. They are no longer able to disturb our peace, and through us, the peace of others. How often we grow fretful because people differ from us. We say, "Why should this man think his way and not my way? Why should he act according to his ideas instead of according to mine?" These are thoughts which are born of limited understanding, but when our vision dawns, they disappear.

I believe absolutely that the greatest amount of good we can do in this world lies not in what we say or in the opinions we advance, but in what we are, the atmosphere

we carry with us. If we have wisdom, if we have understanding, it accompanies us, we express it through our thoughts and words and actions. Even without any word we throw light on the path for others because having ourselves reached a sorrowless state, we are able to remove their sorrows. It is not a question of merely theorizing or analyzing; we know, we feel, we possess, and are able to convey something of our own surety. Unconsciously those around us are benefited by that which is already realized within us. Perhaps the only way to express the highest type of spirituality is the silent way. The gentle, the loving atmosphere that is created is pervading and far-reaching. When we carry it with us, even people who have not anything in common with us, they feel it, they receive it.

Giving and receiving—that is the eternal law. We give what we have and we receive what others have. We cannot give anything bigger than ourselves. We cannot give less and we cannot give more. Once, however, we have made connection with our spiritual resources, then what we give is a part of man's infinite heritage.

Here you may say, if infinitude is man's heritage, if our Source is unending, then what difference does it make whether we know it to be so or not? It makes a tremendous difference. Conscious knowledge is the key that unlocks the door to great treasure. To be able to know and by knowing to dispel ignorance from our own mind and from the minds of those who are also struggling is man's special privilege.

The world has greater need of this knowledge of man's spiritual essence than of any other thing. No matter from what point of view we look at it, inner regeneration is man's saving grace. But this regeneration can come

about only through individual effort. It is not to be accomplished by a society or a league or any organization. It is an individual work. We know, and through our knowledge we are inspired and are able to convey inspiration to our fellow men. It is unshakeable faith not born of theory or mental calculation, but of direct knowledge which opens the way to peace and liberation. We must know and feel and see.

You may ask, "Is it possible for a mortal to achieve this knowledge?" Yes, but only when he applies methods which are suitable for spiritual realization. Physical science has evolved its own methods, so also spiritual science has its methods. If we do not use the latent spiritual faculties which we have within, if they remain undiscovered, they will do us no good. It is when we look within, when we make our mind introspective and try to awaken our inward spiritual forces that we come into our full inheritance of absolute knowledge, being and bliss.

The Kingdom of Heaven, says the Gospel, is taken by violence—that is, by effort, by unfaltering courage—not by cleverness, nor by ecstatic spiritual feelings. The freedom of the City of God is never earned by a mere limp acquiescence in those great currents of the transcendent order which bear life towards its home. The determined fixing of the will upon Spiritual Reality, and pressing towards that Reality steadily and without deflection; this is the very center of the art of prayer. This is why those splendid psychologists, the mediaeval writers on prayer, told their pupils to "mean only God," and not to trouble about anything else, since "He who has Him has all". . . As the self pushes out towards Reality, so does Reality rush in on it.

—*Evelyn Underhill*

GOING FORWARD

by Srimati Gayatri Devi

(An address delivered at the Vedanta Chapel, Boston, in January, 1955)

On this second Sunday of the year, my inclination is to speak to you, not as a philosopher expounding concepts, nor to preach a sermon, but rather to speak as a friend speaks in answer to the needs of those he loves. Another year has rolled by, and as we enter into the New Year we cannot help but be reflective. Often as we count our years and realize how many we have spent on this planet, we ask ourselves these questions: What have we accomplished? What do we have to show for our own personal life? What have we gained? Have we fulfilled all our hopes, dreams or ideals? Do we really progress as each year completes itself?

Often we may have a sense of regression, because as we move on through life and watch the years multiply, the body or our faculties may show decline. On the other hand, there can be altogether a different feeling, not one of decline but a feeling of stability, of maturity, of advancement and fulfillment. I can speak only for myself. As I told someone just yesterday: I feel younger today than I did twenty years ago. Not that the physical part has not changed, but while the physical has developed or declined following its own law, something that is not physical, that part which dwells within the physical, has really grown. It has improved, advanced, and has reached a state from which my own sense of being is more clarified, and the achievement of wisdom seems close at hand.

Perhaps the Orientals really have the right idea when they put forth the concept that man should grow better

with the years. The years added to his age are to bring him all that is of worth. Advancement means to the Chinese or the Hindu more wisdom, deeper understanding—growth of the mind, of personality and of spirit.

Here may I share with you a little story about an Indian woman who was traveling? An American gentleman saw her and became fascinated by this lady from another land. He couldn't control his curiosity. Although he didn't mean to be rude, for he was moved by real interest, he cautiously approached her and said, "Madam, you are so beautiful." She replied without hesitation, "I should be beautiful, since I have lived for seventy years."

Beauty is something within a person that can be fully unfolded as he actually develops. In this the Vedantic viewpoint is the most enlightening one. It emphasizes the fact that we do not stop growing when we reach our physical maturity. We are moving toward fuller possession of all our own resources and learning to make use of them. We do not ever stop at a particular point. We keep on moving further and growing toward more complete mastery. A change is taking place within us, and that change is for our betterment. From the Indian viewpoint we cannot look at a man and say he has done all that he can do for himself, that he has lived long, has been successful, has satisfied his desires and has done his duty, and that now he has reached the end of all achievement. Vedanta would not say: There is nothing further for him to do; he may now settle down and retire. The Indian mind would argue that if he has really reached a point where he can say that he has accomplished his purpose as a human being, has fulfilled his obligations to society, to his country, to his fellow man, he still has not completed the task; he must yet do something more, for

man's spiritual life can begin when he has finished with all these human responsibilities. This is the important step in his own advancement, the ultimate goal for which he is born on earth. All his knowledge and experience through the years endow him with that maturity and integration which represent him as a fully developed human being who is now ready to move forward toward the spiritual goal.

Here is an idea of progress to which we do not pay much attention. When we proclaim that we want progress, most often we are simply thinking in material terms. Our very greeting, "A prosperous New Year" reveals this. Progress to us means more wealth, better health and that happiness which is determined by earthly improvement. Please do not misunderstand. There is no harm in having health, plenty and comforts if that is all we want. Go on having more acquisition if that satisfies your desire; go forth seeking new opportunities if by so doing you can fulfill yourself. We need raise no objection against man's material cravings and ambitions, provided he can be completely happy by aspiring to these ends, and provided he does not ignore something that is essential to his real well-being, that of mind and spirit.

Think of our civilization of today. We are living in a marvelous age in which man is constantly proving his capacity for progress. Think of his inventive genius! Every time I fly in an airplane I am more impressed. "What is this that I am doing? I'm just sitting here and moving across the continent at a speed of 250 miles an hour." Now we can fly from coast to coast—a distance of three thousand miles—in seven hours. And what is behind it? The ingenuity and skill of man, his discoveries, his inventions, his cleverness. All this mechanical ap-

paratus, all the feats of engineering and technology—do we fully realize that they represent the progressive accomplishment of man?

Certainly we want to give due credit to man. He is always looking for better things, eager for rapid advancement. More speed, more efficiency—these are the marks of progress; therefore, let us not say that we are not progressing. However, should we not also reflect and recognize that our material, scientific and technological progress should be in keeping with our ethical, moral and spiritual values? Are we putting our creative, inventive power to the best use? That is what all the idealists living in this civilization are saying—let man not use his power against his brother; let him not use his machinery to wage war; let him not destroy mankind in his drive for acquisition or self-aggrandizement. That would not be progress, would it?

So let us remember that our ambition for material progress has to be somehow balanced by our higher sense of values. We certainly should have better things, but not just "better things for better living" purely from a materialistic standpoint. In spite of all we have we still are going to die some day, are we not? Please do not be shocked. I am not being morbid or negative or pessimistic, rather realistic. We have luxuries for our enjoyment and use. Let us use and enjoy them. But we shall soon find out that none of these things really contributes to our happiness, peace of mind or the unfoldment of our spirit.

What I am trying to say to you is that what we achieve materially does not enhance us spiritually. So if we do not think of progress and advancement in terms of spirituality, we find ourselves going round and round in circles, getting nowhere, arriving at no particular end.

As we start living another year, let us start it not with a sense of deterioration or futility nor with a fatalistic philosophy, but with real understanding, an understanding of our goal, our purpose, our own worth. Why do we live? What are we trying to accomplish in life? Shall we not consider what we have gained, what we are carrying from the past into the future? Would not such understanding inspire us to go ahead?

Whenever we reach a stage in our consciousness when we say, "Now we shall settle down," we are ready for stagnation which ends in deterioration and decay. Life (God) puts many challenges on our path so that we may be ready for change. Change accentuates growth. If we cannot accept changes then we do not grow. Unless we go along with changes we accomplish nothing. There must be flexibility of spirit, understanding and implicit trust in the Eternal, and we must adhere to those values which are imperishable. This will give us the courage, the stamina, as well as the drive to accept the change and to go forward into the new unafraid.

In doing this we cannot entirely overlook our personal limitations. This may sound like contradiction since Vedanta teaches us not to accept limitations. It proclaims that man is potentially divine, has unbounded power, and can accomplish anything that he desires to accomplish. Let us understand the true meaning of our philosophy. We can accomplish what we wish within our own bounds. We should not expect to be a Sri Ramakrishna nor an Albert Schweitzer nor a Mahatma Gandhi. We cannot be greater than the sum total of the material that constitutes our own personality. Let us reach out for perfection, go to the limit of our own capacity, find our fulfillment by developing the best and the highest which is

within us, but we should not be visionary and aim at something beyond our own personal capability.

Vedanta teaches that no obstacle can deter us, no opposition can defeat us. The future is ours, life is ours, eternity is ours. So let us take courage and keep on moving. You may say, "But what about my own shortcomings? I haven't moved very fast in the past, so I certainly won't be able to move very rapidly in the future." What difference does it make if you have the sense of eternity? It really doesn't matter. In some ways Vedanta is very paradoxical in its teaching. One time it states that one must reach one's goal in this life. Just because you know that you have another life, another opportunity, don't sit back. Accomplish your purpose in this life. Then, in the next breath it tells us, why do you rush so? Take it easy. Move at your own pace. The evolution of the individual is slow. Progress comes gradually. So don't put any strain on yourself. Live in eternity.

How can we reconcile these two concepts? By our understanding. We mustn't give up our drive for perfection, for advancement, for a definite goal, for the fulfillment of our ideals. Neither should we become discouraged because we cannot accomplish it in one year, in two years, in five years. May our Ideal be ever before us. Sri Ramakrishna said, "Go ahead my children." Always we should have a sense of going ahead. This is really the philosophy of America. America channels her energy along certain lines, whereas India does it differently. This is a country where the watchword is "Progress." Last year's automobiles aren't good enough for us this year. We want different models, different designs, different lines. Everything must be different because we think that is an advancement, an improvement on the past. Americans have

an enterprising spirit. They do not stop at anything. Inventions of today are out-moded; we want better inventions. This is a most wonderful spirit. I say this with admiration and appreciation.

If that drive were not in man it would be impossible for him to go forward. But he should take some of that drive and channel it along lines that would not lead to a dead end, because material progress ends with materiality. Because it is perishable, it ends in what is impermanent. It cannot give us anything permanent, so we must be realistic about it. Therefore we must seek real progression, be sure we are growing in a way in which we will reach our height.

John Ruskin says that he is progressing in life whose heart is getting softer, whose brain is getting quicker and whose spirit is entering into living peace. Softening of the heart means more lovingness of spirit. That we need for ourselves individually, racially, internationally and in every possible way. If we really understood the value of what love is and were able to represent it, we wouldn't have wars in this world, we would be truly our brother's keeper; we would not use the products of our inventive civilization toward our own destruction.

Are we growing in love? When our brain has become quicker we have become more alert to real values. Our reasoning hasn't blinded us to our selfishness. We think clearly, and because we think clearly we act positively. With that comes peace. If we didn't have greater love, if we didn't have deeper understanding, if we didn't have more peace of mind as we move from year to year, we would achieve nothing.

So let us realize this as we consider the idea of progress. Let us feel that we have come to a certain point and we

are ready to begin anew with satisfaction, not with a sense of regret, of disappointment, frustration and futility. Certainly we have frustrations. Who doesn't? Do you think you will never have any more? But as long as we can understand our frustrations and turn them to our benefit, they cease to be frustrations. We cannot escape disappointment. If we want to escape the reality of life, we might as well settle down and leave our progress to Mother Nature. But if we can understand life and accept what it brings to us, there is real growth for us.

I want you to know that I am speaking to myself as well as to you. I am outlining the ideals I would like to see fulfilled in my own personal life. We cannot do this without understanding, faith and fortitude. You say, "What shall I do if I am not strong?" Why do you presume you are not? Who told you that you are not? You may have your legitimate weaknesses, but all created things have flaws. We also have within us the seed of perfection. Why not remember that? Remember that we can accomplish what we have accomplished and what is ours to accomplish.

Let us not magnify the elements in our destiny or in our own nature that have caused us trial and error and suffering. Let us look at ourselves and be glad and proud that we have accomplished so much. Maybe sometimes we need someone else to tell us this, and always that someone is the one who has faith. Imperfect human beings discourage other imperfect ones because their mind is always fixed upon the passing. But those who have real achievement can see the accomplishments of others. That is why Christ and Buddha and Ramakrishna, great persons of great accomplishments, arouse our faith in ourselves, instill into us that courage without which living would be impossible.

Whether we live in the world or live from a purely idealistic viewpoint and dedicate our lives to a great ideal, it makes no difference. We are all moving toward the same goal. How comforting are Swami Vivekananda's words: The whole life, the manifestation, is a process of progression. That's what life is—always moving toward something, trying to accomplish something. Beginning from the lowest form of life to the highest, which is man—yes, you are the highest and you know that you are—the same law operates. So we are all moving forward to the great goal.

"Let all things that breathe, without enemies, without obstacles, overcoming sorrow, attaining cheerfulness, move forward, each in its own path." I give emphasis to those last words, "each in its own path." I'm not asking you to be like me, or me to be like somebody else. That is not possible in this world of variety, complexity, of great changes. We must go our own way. Meister Eckhart says, "You cannot produce a fig tree out of a pear seed, nor can you have a pear tree out of a fig seed." Remember that. We must progress each in his own way, along his own line, within the given opportunities and the very material of his own being.

I have come to see so very clearly that we cannot reform by bringing pressure, coercion. We cannot force man to be different. That would be going against the law of evolution. Therefore, the alternative is to understand and to accept. Do you know what I gave my community and friends as a motto, as a parting present, so to speak, in California for the New Year? I said, we must do these three things: we must not judge, we must accept people as they are, and we must love them as they are. Now try to put these into practice. It is not an easy thing.

If we do, we shall be helping toward our own progress and toward our brother's progress.

We are fellow travelers along life's way. We do not stand alone. Our lives are interrelated. What concerns you concerns me. What concerns you concerns your fellow man. We cannot live an isolated existence. My mysticism, my love of God does not ever give me the desire to separate myself from mankind. We live as human beings; but within the bounds of our own knowledge and understanding we must express what is more than human within us. We shall be able to accomplish this purely through our understanding and the application of our ideals.

We make a good start if we are really spiritually prepared within ourselves. I feel that I have taken into this year greater courage, more undisturbed fearlessness, assurance—not only of things spiritual, but self-assurance as well. Our personal life is not separated from our cosmic life. This is not a statement of the ego. We must have faith in ourselves, faith in our own destiny, faith in our own accomplishments. We must be well established in this, because not to have faith in one's self is to live in darkness, and darkness is obscurity. The future is always unknown. No matter what we know, we still walk right into uncertainties. We never know what awaits us. But if we have faith, we can walk into the darkness without fear.

Annie Besant, the great Theosophist, tells us: "Go then, go out boldly into the darkness and into the loneliness and you shall find that loneliness is the uttermost of delusions, and darkness is a light that none may lose again."

Don't take these as mere words. Always the future has the possibility of loneliness, of darkness, of uncer-

tainty, of emergencies, of all kinds of circumstances of which we could really be afraid. We needn't be afraid, however, because we do not walk alone. Even when we are unaware of it, we are supported and sustained by the Power of which we are only a part. It is good that we know it, that we can have a glimpse of it, a fraction of understanding, because that is to our advantage. Moreover, the whole of humanity is moving with us. We share common sufferings, common joys, common opportunities. So we have one another for support. This should give us a sense of fortitude within ourselves.

With faith in God, faith in ourselves and faith in the future itself, with a background of knowledge that nothing can really hinder us, nothing deter us, nothing defeat us, we realize that our destiny is fulfillment. You wonder when it will be—next year, ten years from now, at the end of your life? Do not be concerned, do not be so far removed from the immediate. Be able to say with Cardinal Newman, "One step enough for me." If we feel that the kindly light is not absent from our life, if we have the leading and the courage to be led, then one step is always enough for us—for you, for me, for everyone. That is the way we have to live—not over concerned with the future, not planning nor scheming nor fearing nor apprehending, not building in a way that makes us insecure. Always one step at a time, one move, letting the immediate present be complete in itself but never forgetting that the immediate is always extended into the next step. It is our understanding and faith which will give us the flexibility to go on and on.

If we live this way, how are we to know that we have reached our goal? We may have accomplished something and still have the sense of not having done anything yet.

This idea of an ultimate accomplishment is the great illusion of all illusions, but this eternal reaching for higher expression is what proves man's infinity. Take an artist, a musician, a man of any creative genius, he is always waiting for his next creative work. He feels that he has not yet painted his masterpiece, has not written his best treatise. He'll do it next time. That's the way with you and me. Even when we have accomplished much we say to ourselves, "There's still more for me to do, still further accomplishment awaiting me." And because we can say that we prove to ourselves that we are moving into eternity, that we are of a life and share a life that has neither a beginning nor an end. It is really unbounded. If we can know it, understand it and make ourselves part of it, then we shall not only solve our problems, but we shall have found our real footing in life. And that life, my friends, isn't ephemeral, an earthly existence of a few years. It is a life that is linked with the cosmic.

Our years may bring a decline, we may show the mark of old age and feel weary, but we can still have the sense: "I have done my part, I am fulfilling my destiny step by step, and whatever the next step may be, that is right for me. If it means new ventures, if it means death, it is right because I am always moving on from the lesser to the greater. I am always going forward."

Everyone remembers the story of St. Charles Borromæus and his game of chess. While others talked about what they would do if they heard that they had to die within that very hour, the saint said he would continue his game of chess. For he had begun it only in honor of God, and he could wish for nothing better than to be called away in the midst of an action undertaken in the honor of God. —*Frederick William Faber*

A VISIT TO DAKSHINESWAR

As described by Astrid Angstrom

On Sunday morning, January 17th, the platform of the Temple of the Universal Spirit at the Ananda Ashrama, California, was graced by a guest speaker, Mrs. Astrid Angstrom of Sweden, whose quiet eloquence transported those assembled there to India and its great temple of Dakshineswar, long associated with the life and name of Sri Ramakrishna.

The occasion was the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda whose whole message and being were silhouetted, as it were, against the backdrop of his mighty Motherland. Therefore to pay tribute to India is to pay tribute to him.

Mrs. Angstrom, whose husband travels widely as a representative of the Swedish government has only recently returned from the vast land of spiritual realization; therefore what she had to give was fresh and vivid. Also it is a land peculiarly dear to her because of early association. When she was still a young girl, during a visit in England, she stayed in the home of a distant relative, a Swedish lady married to a Hindu physician, who in addition to his medical knowledge was deeply versed in the ancient philosophy of his own land. "I was hungry to learn," she told us. "I asked and he answered, and it was thus I first learned about Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. That was before the wonderful Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna had been put into English; But the original Indian edition stood on Dr. Upendra Krishna's book shelf, and very often in the little house in Leatherhead, as we sat before the fire, he would take that volume down and read it to me, sentence by sentence in Bengali, after which he would translate it. I listened

fascinated to the sound of the Bengali language, hearing in this way the very words that Ramakrishna had spoken."

It was an impression which could not be forgotten and which awakened in her an intense longing to go to India and visit the holy shrines for herself, a longing that was not fulfilled till last year. "Then as I stood on the brown earth among the brown people," she told us, "I was conscious of that atmosphere of India, so loaded with tenderness for every living thing—with love—and which to me was like a great silence, an awakened silence. That silence meant India to me."

Under the guidance of Indian friends she was taken on her longed for pilgrimage. Speaking evenly and quietly, but with such deep underlying feeling that her words several times brought tears to the eyes of her listeners, she sought to make vivid the memory pictures she was carrying in her heart. "Let me try to paint in words what I saw in Dakshineswar and what it meant to me," she said, and forthwith she evoked the living scenes that she had witnessed: the hurrying crowds drawn to the temple of Dakshineswar by the centenary anniversary of Sri Ma (Sri Sarada Devi, the consort of Sri Ramakrishna), the market outside the temple compound, with its color and movement, its beggars, its buyers and sellers; the compound itself, its great temple to the Infinite Mother and the twelve adjacent Shiva temples, six on each side; the monkeys clambering over the roof; the patient, tranquil cow that stood unmoved, like a traffic officer, dividing the never ending lines of devotees bound for the temple with their offerings of flowers and fruits to lay before the altar of the Mother. There was also the little boy who flung his arms around Mrs. Angstrom's knees.

"I didn't know what he wanted," she said, "but later I understood that he desired to take care of my shoes, which in fact he did, so that I walked in my nylon socks through the gardens and into the temple of Dakshineswar." For through the aid of her friend Sadhana Devi and the favor of one of the priests, she was able to enter the temple and draw fairly close to the Great Image of the Mother before whom she and her friend placed small candles and burning incense. They then touched the ground with their foreheads in profound salutation.

"It was an extraordinary feeling," she said, "to be lying there with my forehead touching the stone upon which Sri Ramakrishna's feet must have walked so many times. While I lay there I was thinking of a question that had been put to him one day by a young disciple. 'Do you really mean,' the boy asked, 'that we should worship images made of clay?' And Sri Ramakrishna who had the most profound understanding of those who have the urge to create things with their hands in the form of art, replied: 'Why call them clay? All images are just so many stages of God-consciousness.'"

All pilgrims at Dakshineswar are drawn as by a magnet to Sri Ramakrishna's room. "I must confess," said Mrs. Angstrom, "that I had a hope in my heart that I should be allowed to be there alone for a little while, but there was a constant stream of people flowing in and out. Of course it was right that people should be there, because during Sri Ramakrishna's lifetime the room was always full of his devotees, sitting around him on the floor, listening to his words, massaging his feet and at night even sleeping there. M., the author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* tells of the number of people that were in that room on his first visit there. He said that

as he entered, he experienced so great a feeling of sanctity that it was as if all the holy places had come together in that one place. As for me," Mrs. Angstrom said, "it was strange, almost unbelievable, that it was actually I who was standing within those four walls that had formed the frame for such great spirituality, for so many living words.

"The room itself is small with hardly any furniture. There are two bedsteads in it. Both of them looked very hard and uncomfortable. On the higher one Sri Ramakrishna used to sleep; on the lower he used to sit and talk to his disciples. On one side of the room there is an open door through which one can see a little porch and beyond, the Ganges. In the evenings Sri Ramakrishna liked to sit on that porch, and it was there that Naren (Swami Vivekananda) first came to him and asked the question that had been burning within him. 'Tell me, can you see God?' 'Yes,' answered Sri Ramakrishna, and he went on to say that he could see God in a far more living way than he could perceive things of the outer world. Upon that answer was founded what Swami Vivekananda called 'the practical teachings of Vedanta.'

"What is Vedanta? Vedanta is the spiritual background of the universe, the Divinity in the soul, the unity of all life—the Great Self. Realization of this is the goal that has to be experienced in everyday life. Vedanta does not condemn the world; it explains what the world is. It does not require the effacement of the individual, but it explains what true individuality is. Who can maintain," asked Mrs. Angstrom, "that this background is unknown to us. Every man, woman and child and even the animals know this Self. We could not live or move without knowing It. Vivekananda emphasizes that the

God Vedanta talks about is known and is no creation of the imagination. 'Where is there a more real God?' he asks, 'than the one that I constantly see before me in every being?' To realize this God we may begin here where we are, through our own earthly relationships.

"Ramakrishna points out in clear words that if we worship our own mother we shall through her reach the Divine Mother. If the husband worships his wife, he will come to regard her as a manifestation of the Divine Mother. Likewise if a wife worships her husband she will through him reach the Divine. And by worshipping the child, we shall find the Christ child and the Krishna child."

Mrs. Angstrom brought very close to her listeners the pure and selfless character of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, as she described the tiny room in the music tower where she lived, its low ceiling, preventing one from standing upright, its dirt floor and the holes in that floor where the Mother used to keep her pots and pans. "Here in this little room," said Mrs. Angstrom, "Mother used to cook meals over a small burner for sometimes as many as forty persons. She was by nature very shy and withdrawn, but in the bamboo fence which surrounded the tower she had made small peep holes through which she would try to see what was going on in Sri Ramakrishna's room or on the porch where he and his devotees used to sing and dance in ecstasy. Because of this life of seclusion it was said that her inner perception became so intensified that she was able to hear from that distance what was said and sung, and that often when the Master would send a disciple to her for something he needed, she would have it already prepared when the messenger arrived."

Beyond this room is the great banyan tree known as "Panchavati" beneath which Sri Ramakrishna was wont to meditate and experience *Samadhi*. "On the day of my visit," said Mrs. Angstrom, "a man robed in white was seated there reading a holy scripture. In the distance the Ganges floated by, golden in the morning light. Boats," she said, "were constantly arriving at Dakshineswar, loaded with pilgrims. Among these boats was one that carried a group of women, evidently from some distant village, quite removed from western influence, for apparently they had never before seen such a strange being as a European lady. Especially my nylon socks drew their attention. Before I knew it, they had encircled me and begun to draw closer and closer around me so that I did not know which way to turn. My little friend Sadhana told them to leave me in peace, and she would have chased them away, but I begged her not to do so. 'Just tell them,' I said, 'that I come from a far more distant place than they do, but that even in my country, away up in the north, we love the names of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ma, and because of that, I am here.' When she told them this, it changed the whole situation. At once they all greeted me in the beautiful Indian way, with folded palms, and I felt that we were united in a common devotion."

The Belur Math or monastery where Swami Vivekananda conceived his great plans for the future of India, the lawn outside where he used to walk back and forth, back and forth with his brother disciples, the house in which he lived, with his room still kept exactly as he left it, and the balcony overlooking the Ganges, where he often sat and talked with his disciples; the house opposite in which the disciples lived and in which is the

original temple where they worshipped—all of these sacred places Mrs. Angstrom described, imbuing them with livingness by the depth of her own feeling. She told how on their arrival at the Math the monk who was to be their guide came toward them with open arms, saying: "It is so nice always to receive the children of Sri Ramakrishna." "He then took us to that special room," she said, "where many of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna experienced great spiritual vision and where Swami Vivekananda passed so many hours on the day that was to be his last upon this earth."

She went on to tell her listeners that along the Ganges there are several temples. There is a temple dedicated to Swami Brahmananda, the first president of the Ramakrishna mission and spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna, there is another to Sri Ma (Sarada Devi), and there is a third temple dedicated to Swami Vivekananda. In the first there is the image of Brahmananda, in the second a portrait of the Holy Mother and the imprint of her tiny feet, always covered with flowers. But in the temple dedicated to Swami Vivekananda is no image, only the sacred sign OM.

"There is a Sanskrit word," she said, "which one often comes across; it is *darshan.* It comes from the root *dris,* which means to have vision, to see. In Belur Math, in the morning all the young novices or Brahmacharins who live there, begin the day by going into these temples in order to receive *darshan* from those in whose honor the temples were built. That doesn't mean worshipping them," she explained, "it means opening oneself to their vision, trying to see with their eyes. It was for that reason people by the thousands went to be near Gandhi. They wanted his vision, they wanted to see as he saw."

As Mrs. Angstrom concluded her talk a note of nostalgia sounded through her words and echoed in the hearts of those who heard her.

"The shadows began to grow long," she said. "It was evening, and as we passed the Ramakrishna temple we heard music from within. Sweet scents were carried by the wind that blew from the Ganges, and the Ganges itself was still just like a stream of pale gold. It was as if Nature herself was preparing for evening worship. In the temple which we entered, the Brahmacharins were seated near the shrine, and they were singing as if nothing in the world meant so much to them as just this—to experience and to see God. It must be remembered," she concluded, "that India is perhaps the only country in the world that has an unbroken spiritual tradition reaching back to her days of myth and legend. There are people in India who even now reckon their inheritance from the ancient Rishis—those seers who renounced the world and lived in the stillness of the forest where through inspiration and by means of intense meditation they discovered the laws governing the universe and man. This consciousness gives to the people a tremendous strength.

"In times of great need when such personalities as those of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are born, their very lives (even when lived apart and in quietude as was Sri Ramakrishna's) cause a wave of spirituality to rise. The tremendous renaissance that is still taking place in India is due in large part to these two great figures. I heard this said by many people. In their footsteps everything seems to flourish. Following their advent Tagore came and sang songs that are still living on the lips of the people of Bengal. Then came Sri Auro-

bindo and Gandhi and others. Many times the thought was expressed to me that Sri Ramakrishna was the forerunner of Gandhi, and prepared the way for him who was to be the first in the history of mankind to try to carry spiritual principles into political life.

"Every day that I was in India I heard as a refrain, 'Life must be lived in purity and in restraint, because only the pure shall see God.' Also I came to understand the tremendous faith Indians of today (at least those that I met) have in their own country. They say, 'If India is true to her own ancient ideas of purity and of saintly service, then she will be able to master not only herself and her own problems, but she will be able to render great service to the rest of the world'."

VEDANTA ON THE AIR

BROADCASTS

by Sister Daya and Olive Conway

(February 20, 1954)

OLIVE CONWAY: I have been waiting impatiently all the week, Sister Daya, to hear you tell of someone who actually remembered a former incarnation. I hope you will not disappoint me.

SISTER DAYA: Don't expect too much, Olive. It is a simple story but of value because the memories could be checked against known facts. It came to me very directly when I was living in Santa Monica. The one who told the story was a Scandinavian by birth —a good, plain woman of the peasant type—very honest, not unintelligent, but without much education. She was a worker, not a reader of books, and knew little of current ideas. Certainly she appeared

unaware of the fact that there were people in the world who believed in a former existence. She lived next door to an older woman, a very close friend of mine and an exceedingly dependable person. One day, as they were talking across the back fence, the Scandinavian woman asked my friend: "Do you think it is possible for one who has died to come back again in a physical body?" "Why do you ask?" said my friend. "Because," she replied, "I am convinced that my brother has come back to me in the form of my little son."

OLIVE CONWAY: Did she give any reasons for her belief?

SISTER DAYA: Oh, yes! she said that years before, when she had been a small child in Sweden, she and this brother used to play together constantly. They had their little secrets, she said, and their hiding places, as children generally do. She spoke of playing with her brother behind a high wooden fence, and of a black cat. There were many details of their life together which she had never mentioned to anyone and had almost forgotten.

OLIVE CONWAY: Children are not apt to share their private adventures with grown-ups.

SISTER DAYA: Apparently she never did; but they helped create a strong bond between her and her brother. Later on, when she married, she came to this country, but her brother remained in Sweden, and very soon afterwards he died. About two years later her son was born. One day when he was about three years old, he was playing on the kitchen floor. Suddenly he stopped playing and looked up at her. "Mummy," he said, "do you remember the games we used to play together behind that big fence, and

the black cat?" Then he went on recounting to her detail after detail connected with her and her brother, facts which no one else knew and which certainly he had never been told. "Since that day," she told my friend, "I have been certain that my son is my brother come back to me."

OLIVE CONWAY: It makes one think! But I wonder why more people do not have remembrance.

SISTER DAYA: That is hard to say. There are no doubt many who have memories of a former life. I have met not a few who claimed to have; and there are possibly many who remember but do not speak of it for fear of ridicule.

OLIVE CONWAY: But you cannot check these impressions. There is no way of knowing whether they are actual memories or not.

SISTER DAYA: There is no way. That is why the story I told has real value. Apparently memory comes as the result of certain very special conditions, or when someone is spiritually illumined enough to endure it. Till then the past is mercifully hidden. It is hard enough to bear the burden of the present life.

OLIVE CONWAY: Do you know of any other incident?

SISTER DAYA: Not personally. But the writer, Lafcadio Hearn, in his book, *Gleanings from Buddha-fields*, gives a short sketch called *The Rebirth of Katsugoro* which he claims is an exact translation from an old Japanese manuscript. In this manuscript, a lord of a province states that it is an accurate report of Katsugoro's rebirth, as he heard it from the lips of the boy's grandmother. It seems the former parents were remembered by the boy, and located in another town. They, in their turn, were able to

verify the accuracy of the boy's statements. With the manuscript there were substantiating letters and depositions, all very much signed and sealed.

OLIVE CONWAY: Perhaps others have had such experiences. It would be interesting to know.

SISTER DAYA: Yes, but only if they could be verified.

OLIVE CONWAY: Tell me, Sister Daya, what determines when and where and how one is to be reborn?

SISTER DAYA: You have led me back to the great Law of Karma—the law of cause and effect.

OLIVE CONWAY: Yes, the Law of Karma—tell us of that.

SISTER DAYA: It is not told so easily, for it involves the whole field of action. In fact, *Karma* is a Sanskrit word that means "action."

OLIVE CONWAY: I think most people take it to mean Fate.

SISTER DAYA: But it is a fate man has created for himself by his past thoughts and actions, either in this life or in another. That is where the idea of action comes in. Every action has its reaction. Sometimes this is immediate, at other times it covers a far larger span, maybe the span of many lives. Action and reaction are two sides of the same coin.

OLIVE CONWAY: We accept the law of cause and effect here in this material life, but somehow we forget that it works on the subtler planes of life as well.

SISTER DAYA: We may forget the Law but the Law does not forget us.

OLIVE CONWAY: It hangs over us, doesn't it, like death and taxes!

SISTER DAYA: A kind of threat? No. It is simply a law, and law is only a threat if we break it. It is really our great safeguard, for it does not vary. We can trust it. We know the rose tree will ever bear a rose, and the thistle a thistle.

OLIVE CONWAY: Then there is no sense of punishment in the Law of Karma?

SISTER DAYA: If you thrust your hand in the fire you do not feel that you are being punished when you receive a burn.

OLIVE CONWAY: Then when we see one child born into a happy home with every advantage, and another handicapped in every way from birth, we should realize that this doesn't mean divine injustice, but rather the working out of the great Law.

SISTER DAYA: It seems to be the only explanation that satisfies mind and heart. Taken together with reincarnation it gives us a glimpse of the evolutionary process by which man gradually learns to work with the Law until he reaches that high state of consciousness when he is able to transcend it and become one with the Divine Will.

OLIVE CONWAY: Then the man who believes that he can cheat and lie and injure others and "get away with it" is not as smart as he thinks?

SISTER DAYA: We get away with nothing. Remember the words of St. Paul: "Be not deceived; God *is not mocked*: whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

OLIVE CONWAY: But sometimes the man seems to get away with it, just as the good man seems to suffer through no fault of his own.

SISTER DAYA: It is only a seeming. There is no short-weighing the scales of Karma. If not in this life, then in some other, the payment falls due; we reap the fruits of good or ill.

OLIVE CONWAY: But if we do not remember, our bad Karma can *seem* like a punishment.

SISTER DAYA: That is why it is so important to under-

stand. It takes the sting out of our misfortunes and makes us realize that the law is to educate, not to punish. The child who burns his hand in the flames learns the nature of fire and how to use it for useful ends without danger to himself.

OLIVE CONWAY: But he sees the cause, therefore he can understand.

SISTER DAYA: Even when we are in ignorance and do not remember the far away cause of some affliction, there is something deep down in the soul that remembers and gradually learns from the suffering that follows, not to break the law that way again.

OLIVE CONWAY: Then no one escapes and God is *not* mocked.

SISTER DAYA: As Sir Edwin Arnold says in *The Light of Asia,*

"[By this Law] The slayer's knife did slay himself,
The unjust judge loses his own defender,
The liar dooms his lie,
The creeping thief and spoiler rob, to render.
Such is the law that moves to righteousness
Which none at last can turn aside or stay;
The heart of it is love, the end of it
Is peace and consummation sweet. Obey!"

OLIVE CONWAY: It surely does put man's destiny in his own hands, and I can see how suffering serves as an automatic check to the evil tendencies in a person. Little by little, life by life, it can turn a sinner into a saint.

SISTER DAYA: Compassion, fellow feeling, the sensitive imagination whereby we feel the pains and joys of others as though they were our own, are really forms of remembrance.

OLIVE CONWAY: All this just fills me with questions, Sister Daya. Can one ever in any way counteract evil

done in the past, and can one ever break away from this endless chain of cause and effect? For even if one knows the Law and works with it, still one is bound by it, and man's passion is for absolute freedom.

SISTER DAYA: Christ said: "Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free." We are all seeking that great Truth and the spiritual Masters of the race have indicated the path man must tread in order to reach It.

OLIVE CONWAY: Next Saturday, Sister Daya, will you tell us more of the Law of Karma and of this path which leads to freedom?

SISTER DAYA: The little I can say is only in the nature of a sign-post.

OLIVE CONWAY: Reading, "This way to heaven"?

SISTER DAYA: This way to something far greater than heaven, Olive, to full realization, to the bliss of boundless Being.

OLIVE CONWAY: A sign-post will be welcome; for most of us don't know where we are going; only we know we're on our way. Thank you, Sister Daya.

(February 27, 1954)

OLIVE CONWAY: This great picture of soul evolution, Sister Daya, which you have described in your recent broadcast on *Reincarnation and Karma,* it opens up such tremendous vistas. I see now how any single life is but one little act in the great drama of the soul.

SISTER DAYA: "All the world's a stage," Olive, on which human beings are called upon to play many different parts.

OLIVE CONWAY: "All the world's a stage, and all the men

and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances!" What Shakespeare said really is true, isn't it? I wonder if that accounts for man's inborn love of the drama. His whole life is a play.

SISTER DAYA: So that for him the theatre or the moving picture is a reflection of what he is already experiencing?

OLIVE CONWAY: Yes; and just as we lose ourselves in the illusion of the moving picture, in the same way we have lost ourselves in the illusion of the great moving picture—life.

SISTER DAYA: And we forget that behind the king and the commoner, behind the scholar and the priest ever stands the Actor, our Real Being who never changes, no matter what role he plays.

OLIVE CONWAY: At least it's a comfort to know that one doesn't have one's role thrust upon one, but that each man, through his thoughts and actions in previous lives, determines the part he plays in this life.

SISTER DAYA:

"Who toiled a slave may come anew a prince
For gentle worthiness and merit won.
Who ruled a king may wander earth in rags
For things done and undone."

OLIVE CONWAY: But is there no way of counteracting evil done in the past? Last Saturday, Sister Daya, you promised to answer this question.

SISTER DAYA: I said I would try. But only the spiritually illumined, the Master Spirits, can speak with real knowledge and authority on these vast matters. We take from their wisdom what appeals to our heart and our reason, and act upon it as a scientist acts upon an hypothesis, until we have proved it through our own inner illumination.

OLIVE CONWAY: What you say, Sister Daya, does appeal to my heart and reason; so please share with me your views on this subject of past evil Karma.

SISTER DAYA: We are told that man can do nothing to avert his *immediate* Karma. That is, his family, the circumstances into which he is born, and all else that is ripe for harvesting. It is said, however, that he can counteract past evil, the results of which are not yet ripe. Also you must realize, Olive, that much of what we call our bad Karma is the result of our attitude and our acts in this present life.

OLIVE CONWAY: How true that is. We don't always have to blame a past life for the love or hatred, the beauty or ugliness which surround us. We see that in others but we do not always see it in ourselves.

SISTER DAYA: Let me read to you from one of the most ancient sacred books of India, the *Yoga-Vasishtha*. In it, the great sage Vasishtha, instructs his pupil, Prince Rama, in the Vedic teachings. You will see what positive teachings they are.

"Know, O son of Raghu," he says, "that everything in this world is obtainable through the proper direction of our energies. It is by the exertion of one's efforts that one attains to the rank of the lotus-born; and some even gain the inward joy of God-consciousness by it. Know our actions to be of two kinds—those that proceed from our former lives, and those that are the fruit of the present, and of the two, the acts of the present life generally supercede those of the past."

OLIVE CONWAY: That's definite enough to suit anybody.

SISTER DAYA: But wait, listen to what follows:

"The evils of bad fortune are undoubtedly remov-

ed by the meritorious acts of the present life, as the bad consequence of an act of yesterday may be averted by our actions of today. Men suffering under fate cry out, 'Oh, how hard is my Fate!' But Fate being no other than a name for our past actions, is as easily overcome by present acts as a boy is subdued by a youth. Thus action makes the man! A misdeed of yesterday is rectified by a good action of the following day. Let this day, therefore, supercede the past and employ yourself in present action."

OLIVE CONWAY: This certainly should stop short those people who say that belief in the Law of Karma would rob men of their initiative.

SISTER DAYA: It *should* stop them short, but it won't.

OLIVE CONWAY: I have heard this type of person say: "Why should I try to save a man who is drowning? I would only be interfering with his Karma."

SISTER DAYA: Remarks like that show a very superficial understanding. You cannot interfere with Karma any more than you can interfere with the law of cause and effect. Such people do not think. If you hold your hand out to the drowning man, would you not be the instrument of his good Karma?

OLIVE CONWAY: I once read some lines from a Tibetan scripture: "Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes action in a deadly sin." To withhold the hand of mercy would be to offend against the great law of love, I should think, which would surely bring evil Karma.

SISTER DAYA: You would think rightly. Man should exert himself. This great philosophy of Vedanta does not teach him to ignore his responsibilities and just sit in a corner and dream.

"It is our exertion," the Sage Vasishtha says, "which brings destiny into action. Destiny is inactive and abortive without an active power to force it into action. It is human activity plus the help of destiny which produces all effects."

OLIVE CONWAY: Oh, Sister Daya, when and how did it all start?

SISTER DAYA: This is a question that only one with God-consciousness would be in any way able to answer; and if he did answer, only one with God-consciousness could understand. The great saint, Sri Ramakrishna, was constantly lifted up into a state of absolute realization, of infinite bliss. On coming down to normal consciousness, he would try to tell his disciples what he had experienced, but he never could; there were no words. It was like describing the state of air to one who always lived in water. He used to say it was like letting a salt doll down into the sea to measure its depth. The trouble was, when they pulled the string to the surface, there was no salt doll left to tell the story.

OLIVE CONWAY: But there are descriptions of the beginning of things in Genesis.

SISTER DAYA: Also in the great Oriental scriptures. But perhaps it is better for us to concern ourselves with the working out of the great Divine Will in and through the cosmos, and through our lives. Let us think of it all as a great pilgrimage, out from the heart of Godhead and back to that Heart again.

OLIVE CONWAY: Then some day we shall be liberated from this endless chain of cause and effect? One grows weary just in thinking about all the lives one has lived and must still live.

SISTER DAYA: Sir Edwin Arnold has Lord Buddha say in his poem, *The Light of Asia*:

"If ye lay bound upon this wheel of change
And no way were of breaking from the chain,
The heart of boundless being were a curse,
The soul of things, fell pain.
Ye are not bound, the soul of things is sweet,
The heart of being is celestial rest.
Stronger than woe is will,
That which was good doth pass to better, best.
I, Buddh, who wept with all my brothers' tears
Whose heart was broken by a whole world's woe
Laugh and am glad, for there is liberty,
Ho, ye who suffer, know ye suffer from yourselves,
None else compels . . ."

OLIVE CONWAY: What I like about this philosophy is that you can never outgrow it.

SISTER DAYA: It is not just a philosophy, Olive; it is a life. One thing spiritual India demands, that he who preaches Truth must be seen to live in Truth. Sri Ramakrishna said: "A man's mind and mouth must become one."

OLIVE CONWAY: It's easy to philosophize, hard to live!

SISTER DAYA: Christ said, "Narrow is the path that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

OLIVE CONWAY: That would seem to condemn all but the favored few to some sort of extinction.

SISTER DAYA: "Few there be that find it" means few at any one time. This path has been called the path of initiation. The Hindu scriptures speak of it as the small old path, sharp as is the edge of a razor and difficult to tread.

OLIVE CONWAY: Is it not the path of good deeds and gentle thoughts that we all seek to tread?

SISTER DAYA: It is much more than that.

OLIVE CONWAY: What do you mean?

SISTER DAYA: To tread the path of the Spirit requires not only good will, but right understanding; not only love, but wisdom. In fact, man's nature must become unified before he can obtain the vision of Great Truth, experience Reality.

OLIVE CONWAY: Do all religions follow the same path?

SISTER DAYA: When it comes to living the life, all the great religions are at one. It is not that some *man* orders certain things to be done, and set rules followed. Spiritual life goes deeper than that. When certain given conditions are present in a man's heart, when he has broken the bonds which bind him to things of death and change, and has made his whole life an offering to the Highest, then the Vision of Truth rises within him. This holds for every man no matter what may be his race or religion. When Christ said: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," he was stating a law as exact as any law known to scientific knowledge.

OLIVE CONWAY: If only men could come to see it that way, and apply their knowledge of these spiritual laws to their inner welfare and protection as they now apply their knowledge of natural law to their physical comfort and security!

SISTER DAYA: If they could do that it would save them sleepless nights and billions of dollars in taxes.

OLIVE CONWAY: I fear we must wait till next Saturday to hear more about the living side of the Vedanta philosophy. Now our time is up.

SISTER DAYA: The great Swami Vivekananda said once that he did not live in time but in eternity. But he had never spoken on a radio program.

OLIVE CONWAY: We are slaves to the clock; so we can

only *bide our time* till next Saturday when you will bring us another broadcast. Thank you, Sister Daya.

JOHANNES KELPIUS

A PIONEER ON AMERICA'S SPIRITUAL FRONTIER

by David Grindell

Fame seemed long to deal quite unkindly with Master Johannes Kelpius. Shortly after his death in 1708 the veil of oblivion was drawn, obscuring his name and all his works, and the community he had led fell gradually apart. The few times when men recalled him at all seemed to do him little credit: John Greenleaf Whittier in *The Pennsylvania Pilgrim* told of

> ". . . painful Kelpius from his hermit den
> By Wissahickon, maddest of good men . . .
> Deep in the woods, where the small river slid
> Snakelike in shade, the Helmstadt mystic hid
> Weird as a wizard, over arts forbid."

The publication four year ago of Kelpius' *A Method of Prayer,* edited and with introduction by E. Gordon Alderfer, however, should vindicate the name of this quondam sorcerer. If he was ever a madman, here in this little book Magister Johannes Kelpius was sane with a sanity too rare in this world. If ever he practiced the forbidden arts, then many pure-minded seekers will feel that they can follow him into this kind of wizardry with perfect assurance, without having to mortgage their souls to the Prince of Evil.

In this dramatic turn of fortune's wheel, raising the Helmstadt mystic from a nadir of oblivion or calumny to a zenith of acclaim, there is a fascinating story, one worthy of the hand of a sensitive novelist. Let us begin it at the beginning.

Kelpius was born in 1673, somewhere not far from Cluj (Klausenburg) in Transylvania, a province of present-day Rumania. His background and culture seem entirely German. His father is known to have been a pastor but further details regarding the family are not forthcoming. Probably in recognition of the son's precocious talents, some friends of his father assumed the expenses of sending him to the University of Altdorf, near the famed old city of Nuremburg. Their solicitude was not in vain, for the young scholar received his master's degree at the age of sixteen or seventeen and published a thesis on natural theology. Other works soon followed; their titles together with the fact that his professor collaborated with him on one of them—an unusual proceeding in that day—suggest uncommon erudition. He was acquainted with Hebrew, Greek, Latin and English, as well as German.

Just as an earnest seeker of our day would likely investigate a number of mystically colored teachings, from, say, the Zen Buddhism of the farthest East to the various systems evolved in the West, so Kelpius delved into everything the Europe of his time had to offer: Cabbalism and Rosicrucianism, the doctrines of alchemy and astrology, the ideas of Jakob Bohme, which held a particularly strong hold upon him, and those of Philipp Jacob Spener, the founder of the Pietists, whose follower he is said for some time to have been. He became an intimate of one Johann Jacob Zimmermann, a mathematician, astronomer and theologian who had calculated that Christ would return to earth in the autumn of 1694, to bring to pass the Millennium. Accordingly, a company of forty men and women were to leave "the Babylon of Europe" and journey to Pennsylvania, there in the solitude of the

primeval forest of a new world to await the Second Coming. The band made its way to the seacoast in order to embark; on Zimmermann's death in Rotterdam, Kelpius, who had joined up, assumed the leadership. In London, we are told, he met the remarkable Jane Lead, who claimed divine openings and revelations alleged to supercede those given to Jakob Bohme; she played a leading role in the sect called the Philadelphians.

The voyage to America was filled with great difficulties: huge storms arose, buffeting the vessel about like a straw; parties forced their way aboard ship, brutally seeking to impress young men as seamen. It was enough to put to sore trial the faith of this youth who was only now passing into his twenty-first year. The story of it may be read in his journal of the voyage, which has been published in the Pennsylvania German Society's Proceedings.

Bohemia Landing, in Maryland, was the locality where they first set foot onto the new world. The date of their disembarking was the twenty-second day of June, 1694; the morrow found them in Philadelphia and the day following that, the twenty-fourth, they went on to Germantown, where they settled on the wooded ridge overlooking Wissahickon Creek. It is a wild terrain of rocky glens. To this day "Hermit Spring" and "Hermit Lane," in Fairmount Park, now within the limits of metropolitan Philadelphia, commemorate their occupancy of this tract. Kelpius has been known most often to posterity as "the pious hermit of the ridge."

The community called itself "The Contented of the God-loving Soul" and others termed it "The Society of the Woman in the Wilderness." The latter name arose from this, that the members aspired to be the Beloved of

the Woman described in the Book of Revelation (12:14-17) as advancing from the wilderness, leaning on the arm of her Beloved, to deliver the true Church. Hence the Wissahickon ridge area was known as "The Wilderness."

There is something that might seem at first quite novel in this spectacle—its American cenobites, its Protestant monks! But further reflection will lead us, I think, to see in the Contented a piece of authentic Americana. Of utopian communities, founded on principles of celibacy and communal owning of property, there has been a lengthy succession in our national history: one will think, for instance, of Brook Farm, of the communities at Ephrata and Oneida, and of the Shakers, who persist, though in greatly reduced numbers, even to our day.

The further history of the brothers and sisters, on the inward side, is the rhythm of their life of piety. They prayed and meditated, cultivated medicinal plants and gave instruction to the Germans living thereabouts. They held religious services in the groves of the forests; these no doubt gained a certain character of solemnity from the long, flowing beards which some of the brethren let grow. Zimmermann's prophecy had proved a failure, but the members seem to have lived on in expectation of an impending Millennium. Kelpius himself, according to report, looked forward to the time when "all the Sons of God will shout for joy as they did in the Beginning, when God was all in all, as He will be all in all, when again the End hath found its Beginning."

The outward history is to a large extent the pathetic tale of the difficulties of so unworldly minded a group in meeting the problems of mere survival and continued existence. They were exposed to chicanery and derision.

There were formidable obstacles in their way even here in colonial Pennsylvania, with its justly celebrated record for the tolerance of dissident religious groups. But truth to tell, not a few of the difficulties appear to have sprung from internal causes: original and unconventional—not to say eccentric!—were the ideas which some of the good brethren held.

Kelpius died at Roxborough, in Philadelphia, aged no more than thirty-five. Fittingly enough, death overtook him in his garden, surrounded by his pupils and disciples. Aside from the journal of the voyage and the treatise on prayer, about which we shall say a few words presently, he wrote a hymnbook which manifests his typically German love of music. A few letters of his also remain to us.

Such is the story of Magister Johannes and his band as it has been reconstructed for us from the few available sources. To what extent do they give us a true picture? This is a question that ought to be faced in order to explain why Kelpius has been so long in disrepute and also why the accounts we read even in recent and sound history and biography show so much that is apt to seem to us extravagant, fantastic. Even Doctor Alderfer, who wants to restore the Helmstadt mystic to good repute, feels that he has to apologize again and again for his "medievalism." It is true that alchemy, millennarianism and allied doctrines were believed in by these people. But it is quite unlikely, on the other hand, that they believed these things always, or perhaps even commonly, in a strictly literal way. It seems scarcely credible that Kelpius, at least, and the soberer members of the group could have done so. These doctrines are, of course, capable of sophisticated, allegorical interpretations: alchemy, for instance, has gained a considerable respectability even now

in the mid-twentieth century from the careful and critical researches of a scientifically minded psychologist like Carl G. Jung. That transmutation of the base into the noble which we have associated with metals refers, more truly, to a *transfocalization of consciousness.* It is an inward, mystical process. In the magic of our own interior smithy the consuming fire purifies our nature into gold. Our nature recovers its genuine and precious essence. This deeper understanding of alchemy has always been apparent to the initiated, to a Bohme or a Paracelsus.

So then let us be wary about reproaching Kelpius uncritically for his "wizardry" and his "medievalism"! And let us not judge the Contented as a group merely from their eccentric fringe!

The tiny booklet, *A Method of Prayer,* is Kelpius' magnum opus. There is nothing in it that leaves an impression of anything extravagant or fantastic, whatever one could think of his beliefs and practices, real or imagined. The purity of sentiments here, the searchlight penetration into the human heart, the enthusiasm of exposition, the firm assurance of glorious fulfillment—all these things invite comparison with some other masterpieces of Christian literature, say, Brother Lawrence's *Practice of the Presence of God.* Kelpius' work covers only about fifty minuscule pages of Doctor Alderfer's book; it is thus short enough so that it could be read pretty handily by anyone. (Devotional classics like this are not, of course, to be read rapidly and then set aside, but rather to be carried with one, to be meditated upon and acted upon!) It also has enough intrinsic merit so that it should be read by everyone who is serious and firm in his spiritual aspiration.

And now in the summation we should like to return

to something that we suggested already in the title, the opinion, namely, that Johannes Kelpius is a figure of powerful symbolic value: a great pioneer on young America's early frontier of the spirit.

FROM A DISCIPLE'S NOTEBOOK

(Continued from the Winter Issue)

An imaginary picture rises before the mind's eye of the disciple as she reviews the Swami's words recorded in her notebook under the date of August 14th. The picture that she sees is of the Swami glancing at his own face in the mirror, after his bath or during his shave, or just perhaps in passing. She sees him pause and smile at the face that smiles back so radiantly at him, and say, with a joyous lilt to his voice (as she once heard him say to one of his own photographs upon a mantel in the Queensberry Street house): "Hello little brother! Smile little brother! Smile! Smile!" It is as if for a moment he has actually discovered a friend—someone as joyous, as loving, as filled with the light of God as is he. There is no vanity, no egotism in the greeting. It is just a recognition of those pure and shining qualities which he yearns to find in others, and searches for so wistfully in the faces of those around him. Small wonder that like an only child he plays little games with himself.

As for the members of his community, their morning glance into the mirror has not been so rewarding. Yet later, at the early session of the Summer School, they have the advantage over the Swami, for as they sit in a circle before him, he must look into their faces, whereas it is their blessed privilege to gaze into the brightness of his holy countenance.

On this particular morning of August 14th, the Swami as usual closed his eyes during a brief meditation, chanted the sacred AUM, and then read the salient thought for the day from the book of *Daily Thoughts and Prayers*:

The weight of the world falls on those who throw their weight on the world.

Swami: This is according to the law of justice, the law of compensation. You cannot do one kind of thing to another human being and expect the opposite kind of thing in return. When you throw your weight upon the world, then the world throws its weight upon you. In this connection, Emerson says something very interesting, and all true observers must come to the same conclusion. He says: You cannot have a slave without being made a slave. That is, one end of the chain with which you bind your slave goes around his neck and the other end automatically goes around your own. It is like looking at your face in the mirror: If you frown you get a frowning reflection, if you make an ugly face your own ugliness comes back at you. If, on the other hand, the expression on your face is pleasing, you may by looking at it receive inspiration and impetus. This does not mean that you are to be vain, but if there is a calmness, a certain amount of spiritual radiance shining through you as the result of your thought, your aspiration, you cannot help but be uplifted by it. It is not a question of imagination; it is actually there—God's light reflected to you from your own countenance.

Also the reverse can be true, and instead of being filled with new life and courage you are weighted down with depression and self-depreciation. It is, as I said, not a question of vanity. When you see your face shining, it

does not give you a sense of personal importance, not at all. Rather it is like a benediction. With a true devotee one can see his Ideal manifesting through him. He ceases to care for his personal entity as such, but he begins to absorb more and more the qualities of Godhead.

The weight of the world falls on those who throw their weight on the world. This applies in all our relationships. We receive what we give. Of course there are spiritually evolved human beings for whom this law does not hold. They will not allow you to throw your weight on them, or rather, if you try to do so, you receive from them only their higher qualities. One who has rid himself of selfish instinct does not wish to throw his weight on anyone.

Swami Vivekananda used to say that when anyone assumes a melancholy attitude and carries an air of grief, sorrow and a long, sad face, he should not come into the company of others, because such a mood is contagious. He would say: "Go and shut yourself in a closet till you have worked it out, thrown it off." The idea is that we should not encourage that element. We should discard it, not just helplessly struggle and sink. And it is so easy. We should just let it go—drop it. Why should we cling to something that does not belong to our life? Instead we should be attached to God, to holy things. Why brood over what is unlovely when we can fill our minds with thoughts that are lofty and beautiful?

Grief, sordid conditions, things that are ugly, memories that are unpleasant, that have no special significance or power to upbuild us, if through our imagination and our memories we remain attached to such things, they devitalize us and cause us to deteriorate. Attachment to the world always is detrimental, but when we

attach the mind to God, that bond does away with all our self-limitation. It is the same mind that we use in both cases. The difference lies in its point of contact. Where that point of contact is high, it brings blessing, where it is low it brings the weight of self.

(Swami reads poem)

Thou hast shielded me by Thy protecting love.
Now I depend on Thee, nay, I canot live without Thee.
I crave no other blessing than Thy benign Presence.

Swami: This blends with what I have been saying. You see when we come to this attitude of mind the world cannot any longer hold us under its all-absorbing influence. That influence automatically breaks. It is not that we fight and struggle against it. As the God power grows stronger within us, the power of the world drops away. We do not feel that we have done anything of magnitude, but when our heart and mind and thoughts are consecrated to Him, without realizing we grow like unto Him; our whole nature becomes transformed. It becomes beautiful.

What is beautiful in this world? That which radiates God's light. We feel drawn to spiritual personages, even sometimes in spite of their external appearance, because they radiate something. They have touched the centre of all beauty, they have become like magnets; they draw souls. Actually it is God that is the magnet who draws the souls. But unfortunately a magnet cannot attract metal that is covered with dirt. The same way when our life is covered with all kinds of alien influences, worldly thoughts and desires, we are not drawn to the source of things but are held back by the unreal. We are misled by the thought that we are saving ourselves, whereas really we are deluding ourselves.

It is a good picture for us to carry in our minds, that God is the magnet, but that even He cannot draw us against our will. Not that He has not the drawing power, but that we have shut ourselves away from Him, have covered ourselves with ignorance and severed the connection. It is, however, a very simple task for the individual to remove these barricades.

Every day we go through the process of cleansing the body. If the inner being was cleansed in like manner, the spell that separates us from God would be broken, and we would be brought at once into contact with Him—with our true being.

(Swami reads lesson)

Our happiness depends on the happiness of others. We should expand our little nature. There is no such thing as selfish happiness in political life; there is no such thing as selfish happiness in social life; there is no such thing as selfish happiness in spiritual life. Unhappiness means that we close our hearts to the higher avenues of true joy. True happiness is contained in the Infinite and Eternal.

Swami: You have heard me repeat this thought again and again, but it is so true, so fundamental that it should make no difference how many times it is stated. It is good for us to remind ourselves of it **often and often,** until it becomes like our second nature.

(Swami reads prayer)

May the Divine Spirit protect me from
selfishness and pettiness.
May I never yield to dejection or
discontent.
May He grant me brightness of spirit and
cheerfulness.

May I find all my happiness in Him, not
in the things of this world.
May He bestow His peace and blessing
upon my life.

Swami: Let your light shine. You have read that in your Bible. Let your light shine and you will find your Father which is in heaven. Merely by looking at a spiritual personage we know that God exists and that He is real, because we see His light shining before us. He has brought it down, right down till it has become definite and concrete. May He grant me brightness of spirit, till like the polished mirror it reflects light and bliss — *Anandam.* May we find our happiness in Him!

Let us all pray unto Him who alone can give us strength, that we may never throw our weight on the world, but that we may be given strength and wisdom to lift the burden from others through our words and actions.

Monday, August 16th, 7:30 A. M.

(Swami reads salient thought)

God has given us life that we may express joyousness of heart.

Swami: Spiritual wisdom asks of us always to express the bliss of God. Sri Ramakrishna could never bear to see anyone with a melancholy countenance. Serenity and sadness are two different things altogether. Serenity is born of *Sattva,* the quality of illumination, while sadness comes from just the opposite.

Life and joy are inseparable. Sometimes we have to make an effort to realize the fulness of life and joy, to break through the conditions that shut us away from them. That sort of effort is necessary. Life is not something upon which we have accidentally stumbled. It is a

gift, it is God's gift. It is like a sacred flame; it can burn all our impurities to ashes. Wherever there is life, there is no impurity, no death.

(Swami reads poem)

My soul is happy with an inexpressible joy
Since I saw His smiling face turned toward me.
I can never forget that radiant smile;
Where'er I go it haunts me by day and it
haunts me by night.
When in grim despair of life, it brightens
my path with hope and love.

Swami: His face is ever turned toward us. The difficulty is, we turn our face away from Him. Some people have the notion that they are too sinful to look up and gaze upon the Divine countenance, and so they veil that Light of Truth, or rather veil their own eyes from beholding It. Yet no matter what we may do, that radiant Light is ever before us, and our great need is to establish a definite relationship with It. We should learn to go to God as we go to our own earthly father and mother, and no matter how great a reverence we may have, it must never prevent our feeling a sense of delicate intimacy with our ideal.

Sat-chit-anandam—unbroken, unbounded, most comprehensive Name of God! *Sat*: Knowledge which can never be veiled. *Chit*: Absolute Being, and *Anandam*: Bliss that never ends. Those who partake of God happiness can never be unhappy; their happiness abides.

(Swami reads prayer)

O Thou Giver of all joy, may I not be
unworthy of Thy gifts,
But may I radiate happiness and cheer in
every hour of my daily life.

Help me to realize that when I am sad, it
is because I am separated from Thee.
All my sadness and sorrow will vanish
when I seek Thee with open heart.

Swami: As we draw closer and closer to that Fountain-head of joy we become joyful. All sadness vanishes as we are permeated with the radiance of that infinite bliss. There are individuals so cheerful, so brilliant, that they are like a dazzling light. Wherever they enter all things make way. The Lord Buddha used to send forth his disciples with the injunction: "Go forth for the happiness of many."

If we always swing with our moods we shall find very little steadfastness in life. Let the moods come without molesting us. Be steady. Be like a rock, unshakeable in spiritual Truth.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed,
If thou the spirit give by which I pray;
My unassisted heart is barren clay,
That of its native self can nothing feed;
Of good and pious works Thou art the seed
That quickens only where Thou say'st it may.
Unless Thou show to us Thy own true way,
No man can find it: Father! Thou must lead;
Do Thou then breathe those thoughts into my mind
By which such virtue may in me be bred
That in Thy holy footsteps I may tread;
The fetters of my tongue do Thou unbind,
That I may have the power to sing to Thee,
And sound Thy praises everlastingly!

—*Michelangelo*

REPORT

Vedanta Centre — Ananda Ashrama
Cohasset and Boston, Mass.

Beginning at Thanksgiving until the New Year, the Vedanta Centre observed all the holidays in its traditional manner during Gayatri Devi's absence in California. Christmas Eve and the New Year's Eve Watch Service, as well as the regular Sunday morning worship were held in Boston at the Centre's new Chapel on Commonwealth Ave. Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, the distinguished Indian professor and his country's worthy representative, inspired the faithful Vedanta followers on a number of Sundays by his learned and masterful lectures on India's manifold philosophy. On a few occasions the tape recorder acted as the medium for prayer, music and sermons, carrying Gayatri Devi's voice to her devoted group across the continent.

The second Sunday Service of 1955 was conducted by Gayatri Devi after her arrival by air. It was on the subject "Going Forward." So enthusiastic was the response of the California congregation to her talk on the same subject on the first Sunday of the New Year held in the Temple at La Crescenta that through request it is printed in this issue of the *Message of the East.*

Three celebrations (in Boston) marked the winter activities in rapid succession: Swami Vivekananda's birthday on January 16th, Swami Paramananda's on February 6th and Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary on Sunday, February 27th. Each of these public observances was preceded by special worship, feasting and fellowship in Cohasset, the Centre's headquarters. Mr. Einar Hansen lent the music of his violin to add to the

beauty of the Service on February 6th, and tributes were paid to the illustrious Swamis by various admiring devotees. Dr. Chakravarty shared the platform with Gayatri Devi on Sri Ramakrishna's day in eloquent appreciation of Sri Ramakrishna's contribution as a world figure.

OUTSIDE LECTURES

On Friday, February 25th, Srimati Gayatri Devi was the guest speaker for the World Day of Prayer Service at North Easton, Mass. It was a combined meeting of all the Protestant churches of the town. Her second outside engagement was on March 2nd for the Second Parish Circle, a women's alliance in the Unitarian Church of Hingham, Mass. On March 7th Gayatri Devi spoke at the Community Church of Boston on the theme "Why I am a Hindu." Another address was delivered on "Vedanta and the West" at Kingston, Mass. on March 17th.

The last of the winter series was the Union Lenten Service at which Gayatri Devi participated together with four ministers representing Methodist, Baptist, Congregational and Unitarian Churches of Scituate. It was held on the evening of March 22nd at the First Unitarian Church and the subject chosen was "Christ of the East."

Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, California

For the members of the California Ashrama the holiday season was an especially blessed one, for it is very seldom, if ever, that Gayatri Devi and Sister Daya are in one place at the same time as they were this past year from Thanksgiving until after the advent of the New Year. Gayatri Devi conducted all the Services during her stay in California. After Thanksgiving, the first of the series of special occasions that mark the end of the year

was the celebration of the birthday of Sri Sarada Devi. The public Service was held on December 19th when Gayatri Devi spoke at the morning Service with deep feeling of the life, the character and the teachings of the Holy Mother. In the afternoon Gayatri Devi and Sister Daya each paid brief tribute to Sarada Devi after which the platform was turned over to Irma Glen who spoke from her heart on "Women in Religion."

On Christmas Eve, the traditional Service was held at 3:15 in the afternoon when Gayatri Devi uplifted all hearts with her talk on the worship of God as the Holy Child. The following Sunday, too, was devoted to the Christmas worship.

On New Year's Eve Srimati's talk proved to be a most welcome one to the large congregation that gathered to greet the New Year in the Temple of the Universal Spirit. Srimati Gayatri Devi's final public Services in California were held on the first Sunday of the New Year. Two days later she flew back to the eastern Centre.

The first feast day of 1955 was the birthday of Swami Vivekananda. At both Services Sister Daya paid fitting homage to the Great Swamiji, and in the morning Mrs. Astrid Angstrom spoke to the congregation on her pilgrimage to Dakshineswar. An account of her visit appears in the present issue of the magazine. On February 6th the birthday of Swami Paramananda was observed. Sister Daya's talks on that day touched the hearts of all.

Sri Ramakrishna's anniversary was celebrated on February 27th. At the morning Service Sister Daya conveyed his powerful presence to the many gathered to honor him. In the afternoon Dastur F. A. Bode, High Priest of the Zoroastrians in Bombay, India, addressed another large group, speaking with real feeling for Sri Ramakrishna and his message.